<p style="text-align: center">Character Class</p>

Vampire Spawn with Class

<p style="text-align: center">By Skip Williams</p>

This column aims to provide players with tips on creating effective and interesting characters of various types. So whether you're a beginning player creating your very first character or an experienced gamer looking to put some punch into an old standby, this column is for you!

The Pros and Cons of a Vampire Spawn

The mysterious and deadly vampire, with its mesmerizing gaze, inhuman strength, and thirst for blood, has earned a place of honor among first-class monsters. Thanks to the rules in *Libris Mortis,***D&D** players can now get a taste of the vampiric life by playing a vampire spawn. These rules allow players to create various kinds of undead characters by treating certain undead monsters like special character classes. The player wishing to create such a character chooses a race (usually a standard race such as human or elf, but any race the campaign allows will do), then adopts the mantle of undeath just as if he were playing any other character class.

Vampire Spawn Assets

A full-blown vampire's sheer power puts it well beyond the scope of most campaigns. The vampire spawn, however, shares many traits with its greater cousin and offers much to player characters. When you choose a vampire spawn, you gain respectable combat power as well as abilities that allow you to serve as a scout, a thief, a lookout, a trickster, or a spy. Below are several assets you have going for you when you choose a vampire spawn.

- **Ability Score Adjustments:** Because vampire spawn is really a kind of creature and not merely a character class, your character's ability scores change when he enters this class. When he becomes a vampire spawn, his Strength and Charisma scores each increase by +2, and he no longer has a Constitution score at all. (See *Monster Manual,* page 312 for a discussion of what it means to lack a Constitution score.)

  As your vampire spawn attains higher levels, he gains additional Strength and Charisma increases, as well as a Dexterity increase at 3rd level.

- **Undead Traits:** As an undead creature, a vampire spawn gains a host of immunities and other special qualities. See *Monster Manual,* page 253, or *Libris Mortis,* page 35, for details.

- **Bonus Feats:** As a vampire spawn attains higher levels, he receives a small number of bonus feats that make him vigilant and quick -- namely Alertness at 2nd level, Lightning Reflexes at 5th level, and Improved Initiative at 8th level.

- **Blood Drain:** A vampire spawn who manages to pin a living foe with a grapple attack can bite that opponent, dealing 1d4 points of Constitution damage each round that he maintains the pin. Each time the vampire spawn drains blood, he gains 5 temporary hit points that last up to an hour.

- **Skill Bonuses:** A vampire spawn is persuasive, sneaky, and perceptive. These qualities manifest as a +2 bonus on Bluff, Hide, Move Silently, Listen, Search, Sense, Motive, and Spot checks. Beginning at 4th level, the vampire spawn's bonus on each of these checks increases to +4.

- **Slam Attack:** A vampire spawn is never completely without weapons because he has a natural attack -- a slam that deals 1d4 points base damage at 1st level. When the character attains 8th level, his base slam damage rises to 1d6 points.

- **Natural Armor:** Beginning at 2nd level, the vampire spawn gains a +1 bonus to his natural armor bonus. This bonus increases to +2 at 4th level and to +3 at 7th level.

- **Spider Climb:** At 3rd level, a vampire spawn gains the extraordinary ability to climb sheer surfaces as if using a *spider climb* spell.

- **Fast Healing:** Starting at 5th level, the vampire spawn gains the fast healing special quality. The character heals 1 point of damage each round, so long as he is damaged and still has a hit point total higher than 0. At 8th level, the vampire spawn's fast healing rate increases to 2 points per round.

- **Energy Resistance:** Starting at 6th level, a vampire spawn gains cold resistance 10 and electricity resistance 10.

- **Gaseous Form:** At 8th level, a vampire spawn gains the supernatural ability to assume gaseous form. This power works just like the *gaseous form* spell, except that the vampire spawn can remain in gaseous form indefinitely and his flying speed while gaseous is 20 feet.

- **Domination:** At 8th level, a vampire spawn gains the supernatural ability to create a *dominate person* effect just by looking at a target.

- **Energy Drain:** At 8th level, a vampire spawn can use his slam attack to bestow a negative level on a living opponent. Each time he does so, he gains 5 temporary hit points that last up to an hour.

- **Damage Reduction:** At 8th level, a vampire spawn gains damage reduction 5/silver.

Vampire Spawn Weaknesses

The vampire spawn's long list of powers and advantages comes at a price. Below are a few of the disadvantages you should keep in mind if you're considering a vampire spawn character.

- **Few Hit Dice:** A vampire spawn has 12-sided Hit Dice. As with most undead monster classes, however, the vampire spawn class grants a new Hit Die only at each odd-numbered level. Because the class has only eight levels, it grants only four Hit Dice -- one at 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th level.

- **Mediocre Hit Points:** The vampire spawn's lack of a Constitution score combined with his low Hit Dice produces a fairly low hit point total. However, his fast healing ability tends to ease the impact of his mediocre hit points, as does his ability to gain temporary hit points through his blood drain and energy drain abilities.

- **Poor Attack Bonus:** A vampire spawn's base attack bonus is +1 per two vampire spawn Hit Dice, which is

the worst in the game. To make matters worse, a vampire spawn gains a new Hit Die only every other level, as noted above.

- **Mediocre Saves:** As an undead creature, the vampire spawn uses the best progression for Will saves and the worst progression for Fortitude and Reflex saves in the game (see Table 3-1 in the *Player's Handbook*). As with his attack bonus, however, these saves are based on his vampire spawn Hit Dice, which are gained at the rate of one every other level. As a consequence, even his Will save is fairly weak, and his Fortitude and Reflex saves are even worse. Still, the vampire spawn's undead creature type lets him ignore most effects that allow Fortitude or Will saves, and a high Dexterity score coupled with his energy resistance and his Lightning Reflexes bonus feat helps to offset his poor Reflex saves.

- **Poor Weapon and Armor Selection:** A vampire spawn is proficient with his slam attack and with simple weapons, but he has no other weapon or armor proficiencies. This fact tends to limit the character's fighting options somewhat.

- **Limited Advancement:** The vampire spawn class has only eight levels, which makes multiclassing a virtual requirement at some point in the character's career. Moreover, a character who enters this class must complete all eight levels of it before adding a level in any other class, and he cannot have levels in more than one undead monster class (see page 34 in *Libris Mortis*). Thus, it's usually best to have a few levels in another class before becoming a vampire spawn. Fortunately, the character does not take an experience penalty for having a monster class (see page 35 in *Libris Mortis*).

  Once his vampire spawn levels are complete, the character can enter any class for which he can qualify, though some classes combine with the vampire spawn's abilities better than others do. The class works well with the fighter and rogue classes and with most arcane spellcasting classes, including bard, sorcerer, and wizard.

- **Undead Weaknesses:** Vampire spawn characters are subject to turning, destruction, or control by clerics and other characters who can turn or rebuke undead. Furthermore, a vampire spawn character is destroyed when his hit points fall to 0 or below unless he has the fast healing class feature, in which case he is forced into gaseous form instead -- even if he doesn't yet have the gaseous form ability. At that point, if the vampire spawn can return to his coffin within 2 hours, he can rest there and recover (see *Monster Manual,* page 252 for details).

- **Vampire Weaknesses:** A vampire spawn has several vulnerabilities and limitations ranging from deadly to merely annoying. Sunlight and running water can destroy a vampire spawn outright, and he cannot abide the smell of garlic or sight of a mirror or holy symbol. In addition, he cannot enter a home or nonpublic building without a proper invitation or cross running water without help (see *Monster Manual,* page 253 for details).

  According to the *Monster Manual,* a vampire spawn must have a chaotic evil alignment. Your DM, however, might allow you to have a different alignment.

- **Impact on Other Classes:** Vampire spawn clerics lose their ability to turn undead but gain the ability to rebuke undead. A vampire spawn sorcerer or wizard loses his familiar if he has one, unless it is a rat or a bat. The character can summon another familiar, but it must be one of those two creatures.

Playing a Classy Vampire Spawn

As noted earlier, the vampire spawn class works best when combined with another class. His second class will determine what his allies expect from him and what he must do to succeed overall. Still, you should keep the following tips in mind when you play a vampire spawn character.

Mind Your Coffin

According to legend, a vampire must rest in his coffin each day. The **D&D** game doesn't have such a requirement, but your DM might decide to go with the traditional concept. But whether you must spend time there on a daily basis or not, your coffin is your refuge if you lose all your hit points after gaining the fast healing ability. Try to remain within 9 miles of your coffin if you possibly can, since that's the distance you can cover within your 2-hour limit while flying in gaseous form.

It's okay to ask for help with your coffin, but remember that it's your problem, not your group's. So work with your DM and try handle most business involving your coffin (or coffins) outside of game time, so that the other players in your group aren't sitting around doing nothing while you see to your coffin. If you decide to haul a coffin around with you, try to limit the impact on your party by finding a reliable way to move and protect it.

Plan Ahead

Issues involving your coffin aren't the only matters you must handle ahead of time. You also need to talk with your comrades about how to deal with your vulnerabilities before any problems occur. For example, get your friends to agree to carry you over running water when necessary. Likewise, arrange to have an ally sunder or snatch away any mirrors or holy symbols that foes use against you. There's not much you can do about the smell of garlic, but your allies might be able to remove garlic from an area you need to enter, cleanse away the smell, or move a battle away from an area that reeks of garlic.

You can use your domination power to force bystanders -- or even foes -- to help you with some of these problems, but you can't always count on that tactic. People who agree to help you of their own free will generally prove more reliable than anyone you force into the job.

Key Allies

You're most effective in battle when you combine your unique talents with your friends' abilities. Here are a few tips on working well with your colleagues.

The Party's Main Warrior: This character is the best one to sunder mirrors, holy symbols, or buds of garlic. He might also have enough carrying capacity to tote your coffin a short distance when necessary. And you can help him with your domination power, which can prove useful against enemies who are too tough for him to defeat.

If you're the party's main warrior, be sure to keep a ranged weapon available so that you can keep attacking a foe that's using a mirror, holy symbol, or garlic against you. When you're in a position to make melee attacks, don't overlook your blood drain and energy drain abilities, either of which can effectively neutralize a living foe.

The Party's Scout: This character can also help you by sundering mirrors, holy symbols, or buds of garlic. If your scout has the sneak attack class feature, be prepared to use your gaseous form power to move into a flanking position with her when needed.

If you're serving as the party scout, your stealth and mobility are hard to beat. Your domination power can prove immensely effective for quietly dealing with guards and sentries, and your blood drain and energy drain attacks are great for sapping a foe's vitality. Moreover, energy drain combined with a sneak attack can really ruin an enemy's day. But be careful to avoid entering places where the rest of your party can't follow to rescue you if you get into trouble.

The Party's Arcane Spellcaster: Be prepared to come to this character's aid when trouble arises. You can always use your spider climb or gaseous form ability to go to the arcane spellcaster's rescue if necessary. Your domination power can stop a foe in his tracks, and your blood drain or energy drain can make an attacker think twice about continuing to bother your spellcaster.

If you're functioning as the party's arcane spellcaster, your natural armor, fast healing, and other defensive abilities make you less vulnerable than most in that role. You're not invulnerable, however, so try to stay out of the foe's melee reach. Still, your domination and energy drain powers can provide a nasty surprise for enemies who try to disrupt your spellcasting with melee attacks.

The Party's Divine Spellcaster: Your fast healing power and undead traits make you less dependant on this character than most adventurers are. The various *inflict* spells can restore your hit points and help you survive when a foe's attacks deal damage faster than your fast healing power can repair it.

Most divine spellcasters also have enough combat power to sunder mirrors, holy symbols, or buds of garlic. In addition, their spells can help to shield you from the effects of sunlight and running water.

If you're the party's divine spellcaster, your ability scores and class features probably make you a potent combatant, and you can boost your power even higher with your spells. Keep in mind, however, that your allies are still counting on you for healing and defense.

Some Key Equipment

Your collection of gear may vary depending on what other classes you take in addition to your vampire spawn class. The following items should prove useful in any case.

- **Armor:** You have to enter melee combat to use your blood drain and energy drain powers, so armor up if you can afford to do so. Your natural armor bonus lets you use lighter armor and still maintain a good speed.

- **Primary Melee Weapon:** Choose a weapon that deals more damage than your slam attack does (that is, more than 1d6 if you're a Medium character) and use it whenever you aren't trying to drain blood or energy. If you're proficient with martial weapons, you have a wide choice. If you are limited to simple weapons, a heavy mace or morningstar is a great one-handed choice, and a spear or longspear is a good two-handed option.

- **Backup Melee Weapon:** Your slam attack is a great backup melee weapon, but you should also carry a light slashing weapon, such as a dagger.

- **Ranged Weapon:** As noted earlier, attacking from a distance is often the best way to deal with a foe that's using a mirror, holy symbol, or garlic against you. If you have access to martial weapons, a bow or composite bow is a great choice. Choose a shortbow if you favor stealth, or a longbow if you want maximum range and damage. If you're limited to simple weapons, you can't beat a crossbow. A heavy crossbow deals more damage than a light crossbow but doesn't fire as quickly.

- **Miscellaneous Gear:** An extradimensional space such as a *portable hole* or *bag of holding* is great for toting your coffin around. If you're a Medium character, you'll need at least a type II *bag of holding* to carry an object of that size because of its cubic capacity. Some DMs, however, balk at placing very long or bulky

items into *bags of holding,* so be sure to check with your DM ahead of time. In addition, a *folding boat* can be very handy for ferrying you over running water.

About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies, and he served as the Sage of **Dragon** Magazine for eighteen years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual.* When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not his friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

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